



Annette Barnby, Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship, Luton Council

I am Annette Barnby and I work for Luton Council in the Adult Learning Service. I have worked mainly on the educational side, managing the administration and support office. This led to a move to the senior management team as an Adult Skills Team Manager - I was now beginning to work more strategically.

Why did you choose an apprenticeship?

The delivery of apprenticeships now fell within my Adult Skills role. I researched the outcomes and skills that would be gained from the L6 Chartered Managers Degree and felt they would support my development to become more strategic and to look after a highly skilled team. The joined-up approach of a long course offered more skills and deeper knowledge than short CPD sessions that were available in house. The benefits of the apprenticeship were that it was supported by Chartered Managers Institute which provided Chartered Managers status. The training was funded by the levy, and I would move through the process with a group of peers who would support each other. At my appraisal my manager was happy to mentor me throughout and so it started from there.

How do you balance working and studying at the same time?

I think this is the most difficult balancing act to get right. There were often activities within work that correlated with the outcomes of the standard, so shadowing, learning more about a new process or carrying it out autonomously all fitted into study perfectly.

This apprenticeship was delivered on a 'day release' model so fortnightly I attended pre-arranged face-to-face sessions at the University, which made it easier to block the time in my diary.

There were times where deadlines for assignments meant I couldn't carry out the apprenticeship work within the working week. On these occasions I did spend weekends and evenings studying or writing up but this was balanced by being able to take time off elsewhere. Along with others on the course, I worried that I wasn't writing at the correct level, but the feedback was always positive.

Other times I became absorbed in the subject and carried on with further reading which developed my knowledge but was additional to the needs of the standard.

I think it's important to be flexible, putting in the hours at the right time, being organised, booking study time to reduce interruptions. Often at the end of the day I would spend half an hour or so reading rather than starting a new task.

What's been the most rewarding part of your apprenticeship so far?

Working with other apprentices from a range of organisations. We were able to support each other with both the apprenticeship and wider work queries. We set up a WhatsApp group for moral support which was invaluable and allows us to keep in touch 'post apprenticeship'.

The experience and knowledge of the tutors delivering the course was brilliant, they were able to link the theory to practice improving skills and behaviours.

Being able to put a new theory into practice and see it work successfully in the workplace.

Having more confidence in my actions to move the team forward and support them in their development.

Do you have any advice to offer anyone considering an apprenticeship role in local government?

For existing employees it is a great opportunity to gain some real knowledge and skills to develop your current role and beyond. Having a mentor is key and if they are within the same department definitely helps to contextualise any theory that you are learning.

Be prepared for the commitment of a long course of study, keep on top of the work right from the start, even if it means you put in some of your own time to take back in lieu at a later date.

Get to know the outcomes of your standard, and your qualification if there is one, then you will be able to identify any instances in the workplace that will evidence your learning easily.

Don't be worried about asking colleagues to provide a witness testimony on how an outcome has been evidenced in your practice. This is really strong evidence and if you don't ask for it at the time – you will forget!

Do your maths and English first if needed as trying to fit this in alongside the apprenticeship is a big ask.